

IN A PERFECT PLAY

By Richard Kann

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It was all rather new to Hartley, this talk about "spot lights," "back drops" and "tormentors." He didn't know until Buscoe came up into the woods for three weeks of fishing that the stage had a vernacular that was utterly unintelligible to him. Yet he was a good deal interested in theatrical things. He hoped some day to write a play. There was an incident in his own life that would make the plot.

The acquaintance began in a matter of fact, fishing resort sort of way. Buscoe in signing the register had noticed Richard Curtis Hartley's signature just above his own.

"The man's some sort of an author, isn't he?" he asked the clerk. The clerk replied that Hartley was indeed an author who was in the habit of spending his summers at the resort.

"That must be the man," Buscoe had remarked absently. "Show him to me when he comes in."

Within a day after that Hartley began to hear things about the stage. Within a week he began to hear about "The Perfect Play."

"Some man like you," Buscoe told him, "could write such a play. I've had the plot in mind for months, but I can't write the dialogue."

They were out on a little canoe pier in the moonlight when Buscoe outlined "The Perfect Play" to Hartley.

"The heroine," he began rapidly, "must be a pretty girl and a good girl, unsophisticated and trustful. While still a young woman she falls in love with a man. Not really in love, but she thinks she does. She believes she is in love with the man to such an extent that when he proposes an elopement she is romantically charmed. She has no family to consider, and there is no reason why she should elope with the man except that he is the sort of a man who could not come out openly with a proposal of marriage without arousing the opposition of her guardian. So she elopes. At their destination she leaves him, having come to her senses en route. Naturally she dreams to go back to the people who have been all her life long kind to her, so she goes away alone.

"Some years later she meets the real man. Then write in your love story. Prepare for the announcement of their engagement and then bring on your 'heavy.' Have him come from the village where your heroine was born and have him at once recognize her.

"He is a warm friend of the hero of the play and believes it is his plain duty to tell the elopement story. Your



"I'VE GOT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING, BUSCOE," HE SAID.

strong dialogue begins at this point. Have him argue with the heroine that she ought herself to tell him. Have her admit it, but hold that there will be time to tell him after they are married; that if he is told now it may make a difference; that she won't give him up, she won't, she won't! That's your second act climax."

"And then," interrupted Hartley, "have the 'heavy,' as you call him, tell the story to the real man and have him ask her about it. Then have them part. That's the way the fourth act would be, wouldn't it?"

"No," said Buscoe solemnly. "This man and this heroine of mine have absolutely no family ties to consider. After the man had been told about the woman there would be a parting. That would be the third act. But in 'The Perfect Play' both the man and the woman would reconsider. He would seek the woman out, and the fourth act would bring them together, happily married."

"A play like that, you say," interrupted Hartley, "has never been written?"

"In plays that have that sort of a woman for a heroine," explained Buscoe, "usually also the violation of the social law has been a serious one. In 'The Perfect Play' the woman must early come to realize her folly and feel a usual but entirely unwarranted and exaggerated sense of her wrongdoing. When she meets the man, she naturally dreads to tell him. Well, never mind

about that. That doesn't get explained to the audience until the last act, and then only from her point of view in a manner to excite for her additional sympathy."

Buscoe realized afterward that the explanation of "The Perfect Play" was about the longest speech he had ever made.

Hartley was staring at him when he finished.

"I've got to tell you something, Buscoe," he said. "I couldn't tell you except that you have told it to me indirectly."

"Yes," said Buscoe questioningly.

"It happened to me," Hartley began, "just like you told it. It happened here last summer. She came here with some people from Davenport. She was a governess, the sort that travels with people to Europe in the winter. She was alone in the world. She wouldn't give me any hope at all, but I was sure she cared. Just about then it happened. It wasn't a man that came and told, but a woman, a woman whom I had known and who had known her."

He suddenly stopped.

"The next day she was gone."

"And you let her go," said Buscoe quietly, "until she had gone where you couldn't find her. And now you come back here in the summer to hope and hope."

"For the last act," said Hartley sadly, "only for that."

"In 'The Perfect Play,'" said Buscoe, "the hero sought her out, and the last act set would show an exterior water scene, with trees and a rising moon."

Hartley was still looking off across the water.

"A young woman my wife has known for a long time"—Buscoe was talking to the moon apparently—"grew confidential a few months ago. She is responsible for the plot of 'The Perfect Play.' She thought the story would make a perfect play and that with my help she could write it. She told my wife finally who the man was."

Hartley had grasped him by the shoulder.

"You are the man, Hartley." Buscoe was smiling. "She said you were here for the summer. You see, she knew more about you than you knew about her. So I thought that as long as I needed a vacation I might as well come here and incidentally become acquainted with you and your ideas about the fourth act. Since you apparently agree, here is her address." He peered by moonlight into his card-case. "I think I shall be here about two weeks longer," he went on serenely. "That's time enough for you to get back here on your honeymoon. This is the fourth act set 'by nature.'"

Death by Falling Is Pleasant.

Most people regard death by a fall as one of the most agonizing forms of dying. This opinion is erroneous. The first fact to be considered is that the subjective feelings in the various kinds of fall are the same. There are people who have escaped death by a hair-breadth who reached the stage of unconsciousness and who are able to report what they felt. A scientific gentleman who has occupied himself with this interesting question for many years bases his observations on personal experience and on a large number of cases which have occurred not only in the mountains, but also in war, in industrial establishments and in railway accidents.

The victim suffers no pain, no paralyzing terror. He is perfectly aware of what is going on. The time seems long to him. In a few seconds he is able to think so much that he can report for an entire hour on it. His thinking power is immensely increased. In almost all cases the past seems suddenly lighted up as if by a flash of lightning. All phases of life pass before the mind's eye, nothing petty or unimportant disturbing the retrospect. Then gentle, soft tones sound in one's ears and die away at last when unconsciousness sets in. One hears the fall of the body, but does not feel it.

Small Men's Marital Woes.

"Did you ever notice," asked one of a group of friends, "that in ninety-nine out of every hundred separation actions the man is small of stature? Well, it is so. Just notice in the future. Of course in divorce actions the rule will not hold, but in separation suits, where the parties wish to part merely through an inability to live happily together, you will find that the man is slight in build and below the medium of height. I attribute three-fourths of the trouble to the man too. The smaller the man is the more egotistical he is and will not, as a rule, give way to his wife in anything. He meddles in the household affairs, decides what the baby shall wear and takes any wifely rebuke or fault finding very seriously, whereas a big, burly man would laugh, or at least keep still and say nothing. Mind you, I am not saying that all small men are egotistical, for I am rather small myself, but in cases of this kind it is a fact that the majority of complainants are small in stature and small in mind."—New York World.

Tennyson.

Miss Weld in writing of the visit of Tennyson to her father's house in London says: "My uncle disliked an overdisplay of demonstration in public and said that in his experience 'when young married people keep on publicly railing 'my dears' thick upon each other it is a sure sign that a quarrel is at hand.'"

"Akin to this hatred of unreal affection was my uncle's dislike to the fulsome flattery and general rapidness of many after dinner speeches, and he declared to me that, if called on to make a speech when he felt he had really nothing to say, he should just rise and exclaim,

"Out of my platitude, as I live, therefore no platitude—pray forgive, and promptly resume his seat."

Shaky Rope Bridges.

In the wilds of South America many rope bridges exist, and in writing of them a traveler, who published through Messrs. Longmans "The Great Mountains and Forests of South America," says: "There being no trees here, such bridges as were necessary were usually constructed of a couple of ropes stretched across a chasm, upon which was spread a rough kind of matting made of plant brushwood or a sort of rush. Such bridges swung about fearfully and cracked under the foot as if about to give way. Often I held my breath while passing such a bridge, momentarily expecting the rotten contrivance to part in the middle. There was plenty of evidence in the skeletons of horses and mules on the rocks below that accidents not infrequently occurred, but I was assured that not many men were lost, which, of course, was an exceedingly comforting assurance, especially as I noticed that the guides were careful to see that either I or George was the first to cross these confounded structures. At one of these places we saw on the rocks 300 feet below the skull and bones of two men who had been lost about eight years before."

Snakes Waste Little Time Eating.

A serpent will go for weeks, sometimes even for months, without feeding. Then it may take three rabbits or flocks, one after the other, at a single meal and afterward become torpid while digestion proceeds. When, after a sufficient period of fasting, it gets disposed to eat and a rabbit happens to be introduced into its cage, it may plainly be seen that the rabbit's presence is quickly noticed by it. The snake will begin to move slowly about till it has brought its snout opposite the rabbit's muzzle. Then, in an instant, it will seize the rabbit's head in its mouth, simultaneously coiling its powerful body around it and crushing it to death at once.

The action is so instantaneous that it is impossible for the rabbit to suffer. Certainly it can suffer no more than when killed by a poulturer. The snake does not immediately uncoil its folds, but continues for a time to hold its victim tightly embraced, sometimes rocking itself gently to and fro. Then it slowly unwinds its huge body and once more takes the rabbit's head in its mouth and swallows it.

Superstitions About Bread.

In Brittany when a housewife begins to knead dough she makes a cross with her right hand, the left being placed in the trough. If a cat enters the room, it is believed the bread will not rise. It is supposed that certain women can cause the dough to multiply itself. On the coast of the channel the dough is adjured to imitate the leaven, the miller and the baker and to rise.

The oven is a sacred object and connected with crowds of superstitions. The oven is dedicated, with ceremonies. In certain places in Brittany the bread is watered with blessed water. Bread must not be cooked on certain days, as on Holy Friday or during the night of All Saints, when the ghosts would eat it.

The Introduction of Forks.

Forks are articles of such common household necessity to us that we hardly realize that there was a time, and not so long ago either, when forks were entirely unknown. A knife was used at the table to cut up food, but the food so cut was afterward conveyed by the fingers to the mouth. Rich and poor alike were accustomed to this method and so thought it perfectly correct.

It was about the year 1600 and in the reign of James I. when forks were first introduced into England. This "piece of refinement," we are told, was derived from the Italians.

Serpent Worship in India.

Serpent worship, once very widely diffused, survives in India. Sometimes when Hindus find a cobra in some crevice in the wall of their house it will often be revered, fed and propitiated, and if fear or the death of some one bitten by it induces them to remove it they will handle it tenderly and let it loose in some field. When Hindus are bitten, they have far more confidence in their magic spell or "muntra" than in any medicine, even if they do not scruple to make use of medical aid.

Fill the Place Well.

Where one man is called to be a hero on some great scale 10,000 men are called to be courteous, gentle, patient. There are conspicuous virtues which make reputation, and there are quiet virtues, the virtues of private life, which make character. It is not every man's duty to fill a large place, but it is every man's duty to fill his own place well.—Christian Evangelist.

A Narrow Margin.

John Stuart Mill was once dining with two brilliant French talkers who were given to monologue. One had possession of the field, and the other was watching him so intently to strike in that Mill exclaimed aloud, "If he stops to breathe, he's gone."

Responsibilities.

"Remember," said the serious citizen, "that wealth has its responsibilities." "Yes," answered Mr. Cumro. "So long as you are humble and obscure you can say 'I see it' and 'I done it' and eat with your knife all you want to."—Washington Star.

Defused.

She—Dear, you have crushed and almost suffocated me. What kind of a hug do you call that?

He—That's a Metropolitan street railway hug.—New York Life.

Palmyra is probably the oldest port in England. It was used by the Phoenicians at least 2,500 years ago.

DUMMY DEE AND THE BISHOP

By L. E. Chittenden

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Dummy Dee had come to call upon the bishop.

The bishop and he were very particular friends and therefore shook hands, as man to man, in a very cordial manner.

"I came," said Dummy Dee, "on very particular business, and I would have been awful sorry not to find you at home."

"I am very glad to be here, Dummy Dee," said the bishop, smiling at his guest.

There was a short pause, Dummy Dee frowning thoughtfully into space for ideas and the bishop waiting to hear the manner of his guest's business.

"Are you ever lonesome, bishop?" asked Dummy Dee at last, leaning forward and clasping his short arms around his knees.

"Yes, often," said the bishop, the note of truth vibrating through his tone.

Childless and wifeless and of strong and often unpopular opinions, the scholarly bishop was indeed a lonely man, just now particularly so.

A controversial point had forced him into a position where he stood almost if not quite alone. He tried to believe his position was a matter of principle. His enemies said it was obstinacy and dogmatism, and even his warmest friends were silent and regretful over the matter at issue.

He had when Dummy Dee came in been writing on the point, and bitter, fiery words were penned on the sheets of paper that strewed the open desk. He glanced at them now as he spoke, and from them to the beautiful pictured face of his young wife, who had died very early in their married life.

Yes, he was very lonely.

Dummy Dee nodded and looked thoughtfully at the glowing grate fire.

"Nice things happen sometimes when you're lonesome, though," he said by way of giving a small crumb of comfort to his friend.

"You know mother is sick and down south getting her health and father busy at the settlement work, and sometimes I get kind of a stomach ache in my heart and a lump in my throat."

"My, it most chokes me," he added feelingly. "But just the other day the summer boarder sent me these bicycle trousers," sticking out his short leg for the bishop to see, "or I never could have stood it in the world. She knew how I felt about kilts and aprons and always having to wear something of the other children's 'count of their growing so fast and me not. I slept with 'em that night in bed, and once when I woke up and thought about mother I just reached over and felt of these, and then I felt better. Did you ever try anything like that?"

He asked, looking at the bishop's trousered legs stretched out on the other side of the fire.

"No," the bishop replied bravely; he had not thought of it.

"Then there are always things to do for folks, you know, and that's one thing I came to see about," continued Dummy Dee. "I've been taking soup and books and things up for the settlement people to a little girl who lives in an attic near the settlement."

"She's got a kind of mother, only she's an aunt and awful bad to her. She drinks something out of a bottle"—and Dummy Dee lowered his voice to a shocked whisper—"and she is awful mean to Nora."

"What is the matter with Nora?" asked the bishop.

"A spinal back I think they call it," said Dummy Dee, with a learned air. "and I feel so sorry. I asked father if he'd adopt her, and he said he thought he couldn't. I've thought I'd marry her if necessary, but father would have to adopt us both then. What do you think?"

The bishop's principal thought was a desire to laugh, but he held his peace, so Dummy Dee went on:

"She's English. I've told her about you. She calls you lord, but I said not lord exactly, only kind of next to the Lord, you know."

At this the bishop could contain himself no longer, but put back his head and laughed a pealing laugh that startled the shadows in the dim, quiet library, and he only stopped when he beheld Dummy Dee gazing at him in mild surprise.

"Come," said the bishop, springing up like a boy, "let us go and see Nora."

"Goodby!" said Dummy Dee, getting up, or sliding down, rather, from his chair. "That's what I wanted. Let's walk. It isn't very far, and it's a fine day."

But before they started the bishop swept up the written sheets of paper and threw them on the grate. They blazed cheerfully.

"Hi!" said Dummy Dee. "See 'em wriggle as if they hurt." "I intended they should hurt others," said the bishop softly, with a curious smile.

Many curious eyes turned to watch the two, the dignified ecclesiastic in his churchly garb and the sunny, romping, rosy child, who, not altogether unaware of these glances, took them largely as a tribute to his beloved bicycle trousers and strutted proudly.

Two delightful stops were made before they reached the tenement where little Nora lived, and they went on, laden with books, games and flowers.

"Father says she looks like a picked flower without water," said Dummy

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Dee as they climbed the steep, rickety stairs.

They entered the room in response to Nora's summons, and Dummy Dee, somewhat embarrassed, made the bishop known to the pale faced child lying on the dingy bed.

No one had ever seen the scholarly bishop in so delightful a mood as the two children found him that afternoon.

Nora's cheeks grew pink with happiness and her eyes brighter than ever as she listened to stories, guessed riddles and played games with the bishop and Dummy Dee.

At last the shadows grew longer.

"I've a last story to tell you two children before we go," said the bishop, "and you must be very quiet and listen hard, for there is a guessing part to it."

"Once upon a time," began the bishop, "there lived a man alone, and, as sometimes happens to lonely people, he grew selfish and bitter hearted. He forgot the teachings of the one whom he had vowed to serve, but tried instead to serve himself and was unhappy, as all such men are."

"There came to him one day a dear little friend of his who was also lonely, but who tried to forget his loneliness by helping others and was comforted by doing this. So the man learned a lesson from his little friend, and he, too, found comfort and happiness as the boy had."

"Now, the man naturally did not want to be lonely and unhappy and bitter again, for he found the better part, so he thought out a plan. He would take the boy down south to his mother, who is almost well, but not quite so well as she will be when the man brings to her her youngest boy."

There was a queer gurgling sob that was half a laugh and half a cry and altogether a mixture of homesickness and coming delight, and Dummy Dee shot himself bodily into the bishop's arms, cuddled against his shoulder and lay there sniffling happily. He groped vainly for his handkerchief that could not be found, and his fingers closed gratefully over the bishop's fine lawn that he found within his grasp.

"Guessed," said the bishop, laughing, with a shake in his voice. "The first part of my puzzle story guessed without a mistake. Now for the second. Then he took the little sick girl to a white, bright room that he knows of in the children's hospital, where, surrounded by birds, books and flowers and loving care, she can get well and perhaps come to live in the lonely house of the lonely man to brighten it."

Another little cry from the bed, and Nora's slender, groping fingers sought the bishop's hand. "Me?" she said. "Me—Nora? Would my aunt?"

"I think so," said the bishop. "We will find a way. But what a fine pair of guessers these two are! Never to make a mistake!"

When the kind hearted woman on that floor came in to look after Nora, her aunt being away serving time for drunkenness, they went away and left the happy child, already better, with hope and joy working miracles with her.

"You make up your mind the best and quickest of any one I ever knew. How did you think of such beautiful things?" asked Dummy Dee as they felt their way down the rickety stairs. "It's a thank offering, Dummy Dee," said the bishop, with a return of his curious smile, "for burning the papers."

Three Signs.

When I was a young man, said an old timer, I was employed in an Ohio town of some 1,800 inhabitants. One day the town was billed from roof to foundation in flaming letters. "They're Coming!" One couldn't go amiss of the big letters. They followed him everywhere, and half the town would awaken in the middle of the night with those huge letters staring them in the face, while they wondered what it all meant.

A week or more passed, and one morning every one of those signs was covered with another equally flaming "They Have Come; at Town Hall Tonight!" And you may be sure the town turned out in force. There wasn't standing room, although a liberal admittance fee was charged. Inside a big curtain excluded the stage, and to this all eyes were turned as the appointed hour drew near. There was a little delay, and it was about half past 8 when the curtain slowly rose, disclosing to view another

of the big lettered signs, only the wording was different this time.

The sign read, "They Have Gone!" And you can bet your last dollar it wasn't long before the townspeople had gone. Some clever fellows had worked the game successfully and got away with a snug little sum, leaving only a couple of townspeople to pull up the curtain.

A Lost Art.

"Graceful bowing," remarked the stately young lady at the head of the tea table, "is fast becoming one of the lost arts. Few are proficient in it, and, indeed, the difficulties are many. I am referring of course to men. Women are still mistresses of the art, but not all of them, either."

"But I have seen men who were fat, not to say tubby, and they find that a mere inclination of the head is a burden, for it induces disagreeable rushes of blood to the head, and that is bad for men who wear twenty inch collars. And there are men who are tall, lean and scraggy, and when they bow, being sensitive plants, they think and make the spectator think, of stringed marionettes, and they dread the smile of the man in the street."

"And I have seen men whom the critical moment found unprepared, with hands in pockets. And I have seen them when they were wearing caps and clutched vainly and instinctively at hat brims, and I blushed at their grotesque poses and involuntary caricatures of the line of beauty."—New York Times.

Good Breeding.

The most potent factor of good breeding, the prime element, the first principle, is nothing more or less than a condensation of the Golden Rule—unselfishness, kindness of heart. Nothing else can ever gain superiority over this great and noble trait of character, and without this no person can possess real refinement, perfect dignity and truly good breeding. Nothing can supply its loss, and nothing can buy its possession. Unselfishness is inherent, innate and inborn. It is a mysterious something that cannot well be defined and yet may be found in the poorest and humblest as well as in the loftiest and noblest of all God's creatures.

Good breeding is plainly a matter of instinct, an inborn possession that is one of the greatest of treasures. Many possess it, but a great many more fail to attain it through lack of the necessary qualities essential to its acquisition.—Memphis Commercial Appeal.



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